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ABSTRACT

Italian pedagogical texts in general hold the position that the partitive is not obligatory as it is in French. However, some of these texts devote a great deal of time to repetition and transformation drills while others never mention the construction at all until the chapters on the pronoun replacement of accusative complements. Italian phrase structure rules require that all accusative complements be replaced by a pro-complement in the discourse. Samples of native speech clearly show that the partitive is often used in the accusative complement, especially in affirmative statements. It is not normally used in negative sentences and is also said to be optional in questions. This optional partitive rule presents a problem for the English language learner. It is this learning task which prompted the reevaluation and reformulation of the partitive construction. If partitive sentences are in fact used by the native speaker in Italian, then sentences like "vorrei delvino" (I'd like some wine); should be introduced when the concepts definite and indefinite are first presented to set up a category which will be filled by an obligatory pro-complement introduced at the same time as other pro-complements. (Author/AM)

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Obligatory versus Optional Rules in Pedagogical Texts: The Partitive Construction in Italian

Italian pedagogical texts in general hold the position that the partitive is not obligatory as it is in French. However, some of these texts devote a great deal of time to repetition and transformation drills (affirmative→negative; statement→question) while others never mention the construction at all until the chapters on the pronoun replacement of accusative complements.

Italian phrase structure rules require that all accusative complements be replaced by a pro-complement in the discourse. So we have sentences like:

(1) Non lo so.
I don't know.

(2) Me ne vado.
I'm leaving.

(3) Se volete fargli un regalo, ci sto anch'io.
If you want to give him a present, count me in.

(4) Ci vado stasera.
I'm going there this evening.

(5) Le telefono io.
I'll call her!

(6) Non lo conosco.
I don't know him.

(7) Non ci credo.
I don't believe it.

(8) Ne ho due.
I have two (of them); I am two years old.

(9) Mi dici che è molto ricco. Non è vero, non lo è.
You're telling me that he's very rich. It's not true.

Samples of native speech clearly show that the partitive

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is often used in the accusative complement, especially in affirmative statements. It is not normally used in negative sentences and is also said to be optional in questions.

This optional partitive rule presents a problem for the English language learner. In the beginning stages, he does not have the confidence to be able to chose between a partitive or non-partitive distinction in meaning. If he is told that the partitive is optional, he usually does not bother to learn the rule.

The use of pro-complement ne is obligatory, and among the major Romance languages Italian is unique in having this optional-obligatory partitive construction. It is this learning task which prompted the reevaluation and reformulation of the partitive construction. All other pro-complements replace accusative complements which are either direct or indirect noun objects, predicate adjectives, embedded sentences or adverbs of place. If partitive sentences are in fact used by the native speaker of Italian, then I feel that sentences like:

(10) Vorrei del vino.
I'd like some wine.

(11) Ho in mano dei biglietti da mille.
I'm holding some thousand lire bills.

(12) Ci sono dei ragazzi alla porta.
There are some children at the door.

should be introduced when the concepts definite and indefinite are first presented to set up a category which will be filled by an obligatory pro-complement introduced at the same time as other pro-complements.

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OBLIGATORY VERSUS OPTIONAL RULES IN PEDAGOGICAL TEXTS: THE PARTITIVE CONSTRUCTION IN ITALIAN[1]

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1. Current Status of the Partitive in Pedagogical Texts.

Among linguists with a special interest in Applied Linguistics, there seems to be general agreement that there are many factors involved in the preparation of a pedagogical text for a language course.[2] The form of the text depends on the objectives of the course, the age and intellectual maturity of the students, the length and intensity of the study, and the degree of contrast between the foreign and native languages. For the purpose of this study, I would also like to add the feature of naturalness of speech in the case of a conversation course. Depending on the individual situation, there are probably many more factors but the above mentioned factors are those on which I wish to concentrate.

The instructor of Italian who has considered all these factors and is looking for a text for his course soon discovers that not all these criteria are met. (See Table 1 for the treatment of indefinite articles and the partitive in Italian pedagogical texts.) The instructor who is also a linguist has the additional responsibility of being familiar with the descriptive grammars and pedagogical grammars which include data from student performance, and they want the pedagogical

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materials to represent the best analysis of native speech that is currently available. No text can realistically hope to satisfy all needs, and an instructor has to be able to fill in where he feels there is something missing. Materials prepared for conversation courses, especially those which suggest a direct method approach like Cavagna's Lo Dica in Italiano (1971) published by the Institite of Modern Languages often use samples of native speech for which there is no explanation in the simplified grammar they provide for the student, and they often pass up an opportunity to include a particular grammatical form in the presentation of other similar linguistic phenomena.

A point in question is the partitive construction in Italian. If the length and intensity of the course are such that we are not able to teach all the grammar in the first year, certain choices will have to be made. Does someone who takes a first year Italian conversation course really need to be able to use the preterit, the subjunctive or even the conditional? I think not. However, as a natural class, pronouns and the pro-complements[3] which have the same privileges of occurrence are a significant part of the grammar and since many of them do not have structural equivalents in English, they do meet the criterion of a degree of contrast. The pro-complement ne which replaces the partitive in accusative complements in statements and questions both affirmative and negative is obligatory in

Italian and is one of a large class of pro-complements which are commonly used in Italian like:

(1) Non lo so.
I don't know.

(2) Me ne vado.
I'm leaving.

(3) Ci vado stasera.
I'm going there this evening.

(4) Se volete fargli un regalo, ci sto anch'io.
If you want to give him a present, count me in.

(5) Le telefono io.
I'll call her.

(6) Non ci credo.
I don't believe it.

(7) Non li conosco.
I don't know them (m.pl.)

(8) Ne ho due.
I have two (of them); I am two years old.

(9) Mi dici che è molto ricco. Non è vero, non lo è.
You're telling me that he's very rich. It's not true.

According to Agard and DiPietro (1965), the proper use of these pro-complements constitutes a major problem for the English speaking student of Italian since English does not have the equivalent in all cases and lacks the mechanism for replacing complements in verb phrases. They claim that as an accusative complement the partitive in:

(10) Compro delle banane al mercato.
I buy bananas at the market.

is in free stylistic variation with (11):

(11) Compro banane al mercato.
I buy bananas at the market.

although both sentences contain ne when the accusative complements are replaced by pro-complements as in (12):

(12) Ne compro al mercato.
I buy them at the market.

In an article written nearly 50 years ago, Vaughan (1926) contends that this optionality makes the language difficult to master. Grammars that he surveyed stated that the word 'some' was frequently translated in Italian by the preposizione articolata (preposition 'di' plus definite article) del, della, dei, etc., or that it might be omitted or that the partitive was not used in an indefinite or general sense, nor in negative sentences. (See Table 2 for Vaughan's English-Italian correspondences.)

The general rule in Vaughan's survey seemed to be that when an English noun is accompanied by 'some' or 'any' or when its meaning would be unchanged by prefixing 'some' or 'any', we have a noun in the partitive sense and should use del, della, dei, etc. This rule seems to imply that the English 'some' and 'any' are exact semantic equivalents and that they could be substituted for each other in any negative or question. Vaughán did not accept this rule and Robin Lakoff's (1969) article on the presuppositions involved in sentences with 'some' and 'any' seem to support his position.[4] Current research is now trying to sort out the various meanings of 'some' and 'any' and ∅ indefinite article as in (13), (14), and (15)[5]:

(13) I don't have some time.

(14) I don't have any time.

(15) I don't have time.

Therefore, I will not attempt to try to solve this problem. It suffices to say that the generalization that the translation of the Italian partitive is English 'some' or 'any' is simplistic and inaccurate as I will show later. Features of ± Specific have been proposed to distinguish sentences with 'some' from generic sentences with 'any'. Here again we are dealing with a question of meaning and whether or not what is known to the speaker is also known to the hearer.

2. Definite and Indefinite Articles in Italian and English.

Definite and indefinite articles are elements of the surface structure in the Romance Languages but not all have singular forms which have structurally equivalent plural forms. The singular indefinite forms are not distinguished in form from the number 'one', but they have the additional meanings of non-specific, generic, quantifier or classifying.

French and Italian are the only major Romance Languages that use the partitive to indicate indefinite plural and mass nouns, but the rule for doing so is much easier in French because both the partitive and pro-complement which replaces it, en, are obligatory as in:

(16) J'ai un livre. J'en ai un.
I have a book. I have one.

(17) J'ai des livres. J'en ai.
I have (some) books. I have some.

and

(18) Je veux du vin. J'en veux.
I want (some) wine. I want some.

Valdman (1961)

Aside from the obligatory-optional distinction between French and Italian, another reason for considering the partitive an indefinite article in its own right in Italian is that it either occurs in its prepcsition plus article form or it is $\emptyset$. The normative rule which many Italian grammars and dictionaries for Italians give for not using the partitive plus noun after prepositions because of the resulting sequences of two prepositions (di plus preposition) is simply not followed as is illustrated in (19), (20), and (21)[6]:

(19) Minnie investí gli spettatori con delle violenze verbali.
Minnie hurled verbal insults at the audience.

(20) Capuozzo riesce perfino a parlare con Napoli per delle ore da una cabina pubblica senza spendere una lira.

Capuozzo succeeds even in talking with Naples for hours from a public phone booth without spending a red cent.

(Terzoli and Vaime)

(21) Queste stesse cose io le ho già udite dire a degli altri.
I already heard these same things said to others.

Rohlfs (1968) also cautions against the use of partitives plus prepositions but all of his examples are idioms or fixed expressions in Italian which we shall see later are not to be considered as parts of a treatment of regular grammatical patterns.

Both Italian and English use the concepts definite and indefinite, and articles may be definite or indefinite, singular or plural or ∅ with mass and count nouns. However, their distribution is not the same. With the features singular, indefinite and class, we can have in English:

(22) A consumer is entitled to rights.

which cannot be pluralized with 'some' as in:

(23) Some consumers are entitled to rights.

and retain its meaning of 'a member of a group.' The plural without the article is the correct usage. The first indefinite is the class indefinite which contrasts with the singular indefinite in (24):

(24) A man just shot himself.

which when pluralized becomes:

(25) Some men just shot themselves.

The English sentence (26):

(26) Milk is good.

includes a ∅ article with the generic subject while in Italian we have:

(27) Il latte è buono.

which means both 'Milk is good (for you)' and 'The milk (you just poured for me) is good.' The definite article is required in (27) and does not alternate with an indefinite or ∅ article. Names of professions which are not modified have a ∅ article in the singular and the plural as in:

(28) Piero è architetto.
Piero is an architect.

and

(29) Alma e Wanda sono professoresse.
Alma and Wanda are teachers.

When we add an adjective, the situation is reversed and we have:

(30) Piero è un buon architetto.
Piero is a good architect.

and

(31) Alma e Wanda sono delle buone professoresse.
Alma and Wanda are good teachers.

It is also possible to have the indefinite article in the plural with the copula when there is not an adjective when the sentence is an answer to a WH-? of identification. Someone rings the doorbell and you ask:

(32) Chi c'è?
Who's there?

and you hear the response:

(33) Siamo dei poliziotti.
We're some policemen.

Di Pietro (1971) gives the rule for the partitive in the sentence:

(34) Sono dei professori.
They're some professors.

alternating with ∅ in:

(35) Sono professori.
They're professors.

without adjectives but does not give an English translation so the reader is to believe that the optional principle is again accepted. He continues with the addition of adjectives

which he says makes the English and Italian parallel:

(36) Sono buoni professori.
They're good professors.

in that there is no partitive or indefinite plural article used in either language.

Native speech I have elicited does not equate sentence (33) with:

(37) Siamo poliziotti.
We are policemen.

which refers to members of a certain class or profession.

Migliorini and Chiappelli (1962) have considered the problem of definite and indefinite in the singular and plural and feel strongly that (38):

(38) Mario ha comprato l'automobile.
Mario bought the car.

is no more definite than (39):

(39) Mario ha comprato un'automobile.
Mario bought a car.

unless the context tells us specifically which car is being referred to. The use of the articles and the partitive in the plural gives us various degrees of meaning as in (40), (41), and (42):

(40) Mario ha comprato le automobili.
Mario bought the cars.

would only be said if it were known that Mario was supposed to buy some cars, that is, referring to cars one already knew about while:

(41) Mario ha comprato delle automobili.
Mario bought some cars.

indicates a certain indeterminate number but not too great a number. Sentence (42):

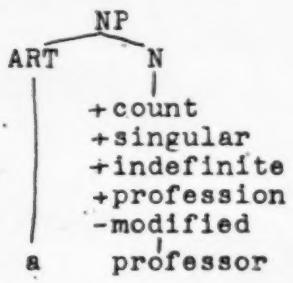
(42) Mario ha comprato automobili.
Mario bought cars.

indicates an indeterminate number which is not very small, making one think of a business investment. That is, one would say:

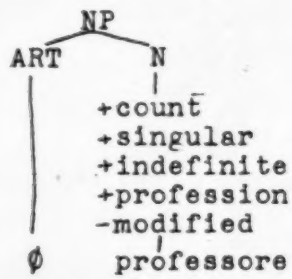
(43) Ha comprato automobili e non motociclette o autocarri.
He bought cars and not motorcycles or trucks.

The correct analysis of the indefinite articles seems to be to view them as being a part of an underlying structure which may be chosen or not according to grammatical features of the noun in the accusative complement noun phrase such as count, mass, definite or indefinite, classifying, generic, parts of the body and idiomatic expressions. As we have seen, however, we seem to need more information than has previously been given in grammars of English and Italian. Language in context in a beginning conversation course must be included in our description. The underlying representations for English 'a professor' and Italian professore in He's a professor. and È professore. must contain the features ± profession and ± modified as in:

(44) a ENGLISH



b ITALIAN



The plural nouns would need to contain similar information but also allow for (45) and (46) in Italian:

(45) Siamo poliziotti.
We're policemen.

(46) Siamo dei poliziotti.
We're some policemen.

The conditions under which the partitive would be blocked must be given in the form of rules.[7] The partitive in Italian is not used in negative statements or negative questions and is not used with certain idiomatic expressions, in lists, or as part of the subject noun phrase when it is the first element in the sentence. Native speakers accept (47):

(47) Sono venuti degli amici a trovarmi.
Some friends came to visit me.

and feel that (48):

(48) Degli amici sono venuti a trovarmi.
Some friends came to visit me.

sounds stilted and too "grammatical." In every case checked, the plural of an indefinite singular article plus noun at the beginning of a sentence was the definite plural article as in:

(49) Un padre buono può essere severo.
A good father can be strict.

I padri buoni possono essere severi.
Good fathers can be strict.

(50) Una chiave piccola non è pesante.
A small key isn't heavy.

Le chiavi piccole non sono pesanti.
Small keys are not heavy.

but as with (47), we have sentences like (51) and (52):

(51) La scuola ha un'entrata.
The school has an (one) entrance.

Le scuole hanno delle entrate.
The schools have (some) entrances.

(52) Ho incontrato un compagno di scuola al bar.
I met a school friend at the bar.

Ho incontrato dei compagni di scuola al bar.
I met some school friends at the bar.

as perfectly natural singular-plural pairs.

When other expressions of quantity, numbers or classifiers like parecchio 'a number of, a lot of', poco 'a little, few,' molto 'much, many,' qualche 'some', alcuni 'some', un chilo di 'a kilogram of,' due litri di 'two liters,' quattro metri di 'four meters,' etc. are used, the partitive is not used.

The indefinite singular article also is restricted in idiomatic expressions without modification as can be seen by the expression:

(53) prendere fiato
to take a breath

which was translated as 'to take breath' in the generally excellent Ragazzini-Zanichelli Italian-English; English-Italian dictionary. When, however, the nouns in some common idiomatic expressions as:

(54) Ho fame.
I'm hungry.

and

(55) Fa freddo.
It's cold.

are modified, the indefinite singular article is used:

(56) Ho una fame da morire.
I'm starving to death.

(57) Fa un freddo cane.
It's bitterly cold.

There are also unmodified idiomatic expressions which use the partitive as:

(58) prendere dei pensionanti
to take in boarders

and

(59) fare del bene
to do something good for someone

Idiomatic expressions must be learned as lexical items and should not be included in a presentation of grammatical patterns of high frequency.

The partitive is used with parts of the body in Italian where the English equivalent would be ∅ like (60) and (61):

(60) Ha degli occhi stupendi.
She has stupendous eyes.

(61) Ha delle guance come fette di lardo.
She has cheeks like slices of bacon.

(Terzoli and Vaime)

In English and Italian, the choice of definite and indefinite articles often depends on the larger grammatical context rather than on just a noun subclass. Brengleman (1970) gives the English example:

(62) A man and a woman were walking down the street.
The man was carrying a bag.

We could not replace the second 'the' with 'a' unless we wished to refer to a man other than the one just mentioned.

Rapaccini (1969) uses sentences like (63) and (64):

(63) Se lui vuole dei dolci, glieli porto.
If he wants some sweets, I'll bring them to him.

(64) Se lei vuole delle banane, gliele porto.
If she (you) wants (want) bananas, I'll bring them to her (you).

and native speakers accept them as natural speech in the same way they accept (65) and (66):

(65) Se lui vuole dei dolci, gliene porto.
If he wants sweets, I'll bring him some.

(66) Se lei vuole delle banane, gliene porto.
If she (you) wants (want) bananas, I'll bring her (you) some.

This treatment of indefinite and definite articles is in no way complete as I have already emphasized but the instructor of Italian must be aware of at least those conditions I have listed for the use or omission of the articles and the partitive.

3. Obligatory and Optional Rules

Di Pietro (1971) discusses the question of the hierarchies of difficulty for language learners and reproduces Stockwell and Bowen's sets of contrasts for the pronunciation of a native language and a target language. We could apply these criteria to the partitive construction in Italian and its contrast with English since they meet the requirement of being permissible in the same environment in both languages and that is, namely, the accusative complement. The substitution of ne for an indefinite noun complement would be the most difficult pattern to learn because it is the obligatory construction in Italian and one which is absent in English.

If we include ∅ with 'some' and 'any' as indefinite plural markers in English and say that we have a freedom of choice, we have an optional pattern in both languages which is certainly low on the scale of difficulty but which does not really reflect the fact that in many cases the partitive is used in Italian where there would be a ∅ article in English like:

(67) L'ostrica deve avere delle antenne, dei tubercoli.
The oyster must have antennas and tubercles.

(68) Io non capisco a chi è venuto in mente di fare delle città in questi posti.
I don't understand who would think of putting cities in these places.

(69) E se non li seguivi fino al parcheggio dove ci avevano le spiders, li prendevi per dei barboni come me.
And if you didn't follow them to the parking lot where they had their sports cars, you took them for bums like me.

(Terzoli and Vaime)

These examples in addition to ones elicited from native speakers I have spoken with support the inclusion of the partitive in a descriptive grammar, and certainly as samples of spoken language sentences like these ought to be part of a pedagogical text. The native speakers feel that in many cases, it is much more natural to use the partitive. The traditional labeling of the partitive as optional in the case of statements and questions and ∅ in negative statements and questions has just meant that the students do not have to learn another rule.

Setting up a ∅-obligatory contrast between English and Italian does increase the degree of difficulty from an optional-optional pattern or a ∅ - ∅ situation, and if it were not for the obligatory ne, one might be less inclined to choose this pattern. The pressure of the pro-complement pattern is too great to ignore. Stockwell and Bowen also consider the frequency with which the contrast in question comes up in actual speech. My study does not include a statistical analysis of partitives in native speech or of contemporary literary texts which contain dialogues but the samples which have been gathered do show that the partitive is frequently used and appears to be the spontaneous choice in those patterns we have isolated.

4. The Obligatory Proposal

My proposal for the inclusion of the partitive in a pedagogical text would be more comprehensive than the presentations which are generally given in the texts which I have used and examined. Students today still have difficulty with pro-complement substitution as I did when I first started studying Italian in 1960. However, if the descriptive grammar and the pedagogical grammar from which the course materials are constructed give more accurate and complete information than that which is now given, the student may have a little easier time. We should require an obligatory rule with the partitive used as an indefinite singular article with mass nouns and as an indefinite plural article with count nouns in an accusative complement or introduced

by C'è or Ci sono 'There is' and 'There are' which is translated into English as 'some, any or ∅' under the conditions stated. We can leave any semantic distinction which my be stylistic until later when the subjunctive and other more complicated pattters for speakers of English are taught and more class time can be devoted to semantic distinctions. The instructor is responsible for the information in recent analyses of structures like the subjunctive which include a consideration of meaning as in Saltarelli (1974), but the beginning pedagogical text should not contain such sophisticated material.

When the pro-complements are presented as a class, they will follow in conversations where definite or indefinite articles plus nouns naturally occur as part of normal speech. If the goal is to make the student use the language from the very beginning and not just require memorization of dialogues about other people or mastery of pattern drills, the speech must be the same as the student would hear if he saw a film in Italian, traveled in Italy or heard his instructor use speaking to another speaker of Italian. The degree of fluency depends to a great extent on the ability to use native patterns in a natural context and the partitive construction and the pro-complement ne increase this ability. The two languages do contrast on this point, and if the pedagogical materials are constructed encorporating the essential criteria we have previously discussed, this interference might not be so great.

FOOTNOTES

1. I would like to thank Bill Walls, Bob Martin, Maurizio Gnerre, and Gigliola Foti for their suggestions, criticisms and observations.

2. See Wilga Rivers' "Rules, Patterns and Creativity," in Speaking in Many Tongues, p. 10 and Noblitt's article on pedagogical grammars.

3. Hall gives the over-all name of pro-complement to substitutes for various types of verbal complements which may be pronouns, pro-phrases and pro-predicate complements.

4. Lakoff does not agree that:

   (1) I wonder if Bill would lend me some money.

   and

   (2) I wonder if Bill would lend me any money.

   are synonymous and feels instead that they are correlations of positive and negative or neutral presuppositions.

5. The section on determiners in Stockwell, Schachter and Partee is an excellent reference for the source for articles in the structure of English. There is still no agreement on how to account for the three-way contrast of some-any-ϕ in:

   (3) I don't like some books.

   (4) I don't like any books.

   (5) I don't like books.

6. Ceppellini and Paniate do not accept sentences like:

   (6) Passeggiavo con delle amiche.
   I was walking with some friends.

   (7) Scriverò a degli amici.
   I'll write to some friends.

7. Even Hall (1972) agrees that rules are useful in second-language acquisition as a timesaving device at the early stages.

Table 1 Occurrences of the Indefinite Article and the Partitive in Pedagogical Texts

	Indefinite		Partitive	Statements	Neg.	Questions	Neg. ?'s	Ne
	Singular	Plural						
Traversa (1967)	+	+	+	+	-	-	ø	+
Plant (1970)	+	ø	+	+	+	+	ø	+
*Speroni-Golino (1972)	+	+	+	+	-	-	ø	+
Bosco-Lolli (1967)	+	ø	+	⊕	-	⊕	ø	+
Hall-Bartoli (1963)	+	ø	+	+	-	+	ø	+
Hall-IFML (1961)	+	ø	+	+	X	+	ø	+
Guarnieri-Amorini (1966)	+	+	+	+	+	+	ø	+
IML-Cavagna (1971)	+	ø	-	+	-	-	ø	+

+ used
- not used
ø not mentioned
⊕ optional
X with mass nouns

*Graziana Lazzarino of the University of Colorado who has long used Speroni-Golino in Italian conversation classes and who has just written two workbooks for Italian 101-102 to supplement the text accepts both Scrivono lettere? and Scrivono delle lettere and Comprano carne? and Comprano della carne? The text does not include questions in the partitive rule but uses the sentence, "Vuole del vino?" 'Would you like some wine?' on page 197.

Table 2 The Partitive in Italian with English equivalents (after Vaughan 1926)

	Statements	Negative
Italian:	Ho ∅ buoni amici. Ho dei buoni amici.	Non ho ∅ buoni amici. Non ho dei buoni amici.
English:	I have some good friends. I have ∅ good friends.	I don't have any good friends. I don't have ∅ good friends.

	Questions	Negative Questions
Italian:	Hai ∅ buoni amici? Hai dei buoni amici?	Non hai ∅ buoni amici? Non hai dei buoni amici?
English:	Do you have some good friends? Do you have any good friends? Do you have ∅ good friends?	Don't you have some good friends? Don't you have any good friends? Don't you have ∅ good friends?

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